

# DUXBURY REPORTER

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## Officer injured at fair

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A car struck a Duxbury police officer as he was directing traffic for the Marshfield Fair at the corner of Main and South River streets in Marshfield Saturday night around 10 p.m., police said.

Officer Mel Dyer, 67, a part-time

police officer in Duxbury and former deputy sheriff from the county sheriff's department, was helping pedestrians cross the streets and directing cars coming in and out of parking lots. According to police, witnesses said that as Dyer was directing traffic, one car failed to stop and knocked him unconscious.

The Marshfield Fire Department

cared for Dyer until he was transported via MedFlight helicopter, to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, where he was listed in critical condition Tuesday.

Duxbury Police Chief Mark DeLuca said Dyer was an instructor for the Marshfield Rod & Gun Club and taught senior citizens and young people during

Duxbury's senior and junior police academies.

"Everyone's just beside themselves about this," DeLuca said. "He's completely about helping people, and just a fantastic guy."

Dyer's accident was one of two incidents that cast shadows over the fair's

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## Officer hurt at fair

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opening weekend. On Monday morning, Marshfield police arrested an 18-year-old fair worker from Oxford, Maine and charged him with the rape and battery of 13- and 14-year-old girls, according to the Plymouth County District Attorney's office.

Police found Jeffrey Witham on South River Street in Marshfield after the alleged assault took place at a Marshfield residence. Police said the girls had given him their phone numbers, and he went to one of the girls' homes Saturday night, when they were alone.

Police said Witham sexually assaulted one girl in the living room, then took the other into a bedroom and raped her before returning to rape the first girl. According to police, the girls ran from the house and escaped, but Witham alleged chased one and tried to drag her into the woods.

Witham was charged with two counts of rape of a child with force, two counts of rape of a child, one count of indecent assault and battery over 14, one count of indecent assault and battery under 14, one count of assault and battery, and one count of kidnapping.

Witham was arraigned on Monday in Plymouth District Court, and is being held on \$150,000 cash bail. He pleaded not guilty to the charges. Public defender Kathleen Iaccarino said Witham works to support his girlfriend and their five-month-old baby. She said he has seven brothers and sisters and lives with his grandmother.

Prosecution and defense attorneys asked Judge Ronald Moynahan Wednesday to reduce Witham's bail after one of the two Marshfield girls who said that Witham raped her recanted her allegation when she was re-

interviewed by Marshfield police. The other girl changed some details of her account as well.

However, in a hearing at Plymouth District Court, Moynahan said "nothing has changed." He explained that the sentence is that same whether it is a violent or statutory rape.

Moynahan said that there was not enough new information to change the bail.

"It's a very complicated bail issue," said Michael Bergeron, Witham's lawyer. "We understand and respect the judge's decision."

Bergeron said he would pursue the matter of reducing bail in a petition to the Superior Court.

Eugene Dean of Fiesta Shows, which runs the carnival at the Marshfield Fair and employed Witham, said Witham was hired a week ago in Maine, came to Marshfield to work the weekend

and was scheduled to return to the fair in Acton, Maine.

Dean said Fiesta Shows conducts extensive background checks on all employees, and that Witham filled out a seven- or eight-page application and came clean on a CORI check in Massachusetts and a background check in Maine.

"I know we're a very responsible company, and we do everything possible to look at an employee's past," he said. "But we can't predict the future."

Carleton Chandler of the Marshfield Agricultural and Horticultural Society said the incidents were regrettable.

"With the police officer, it was a very tragic accident," he said. "It's something where someone was helping out with other people's safety, and ended by endangering his own."

GatellHouse News Service contributed to this story.